

Chapter No. 2127

15/SS01/R553

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***SENATE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 546***

Originated in Senate

Rig Welch

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 546

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE LEGACY OF W.H. JEFFERSON FUNERAL HOME IN VICKSBURG AS MISSISSIPPI'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN BUSINESS FOUNDED IN 1894 BY MISSISSIPPI'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN FUNERAL DIRECTOR ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 120TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

WHEREAS, W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home is celebrating 120 years of caring service to Vicksburg. It came into existence on December 1, 1894, the shared property of William Henry Jefferson (1862-1922), then 32, and his wife, Lucy C. Jefferson (1866-1953), who was 28. Its first home was in the 1100 block of Grove Street. In 1909, the business relocated to its present home at 800 Monroe Street; and

WHEREAS, Jefferson Funeral Home is recognized as the oldest African-American-owned business in Mississippi, the third oldest business of any kind in its home City of Vicksburg, and is pre-dated there only by Fisher Funeral Home and *The Vicksburg Evening Post* (now *The Vicksburg Post*). W.H. Jefferson, a native of Clinton, had decided on his life's career while working in various jobs at Fisher Funeral Home in the years after his family

moved to Vicksburg when he was six. Grandfather Jefferson was the first African-American Funeral Director in the State of Mississippi, while Grandmother Jefferson was a leader in education. Both fought hard to make Vicksburg and Warren County a wonderful place for all its citizens. Their values for service, integrity, excellence and putting people first are honored by the facility that carries their name; and

WHEREAS, on the December 7, 1885, W.H. Jefferson received from the Renouard Training School for Embalmers of New York a diploma licensing him to practice the art of embalming in connection with the undertaking business. Lucy C. Jefferson, a native of Jackson, also played a major role in bringing African-American women into the public arena. When she and her sister activists found themselves excluded from the main suffragette organizations and the World Congress of Women at the World's Fair of 1893, these early African-American female leaders established the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, the nation's first national African-American organization; and

WHEREAS, W.H. Jefferson was a major supporter of the Committee of One Hundred and was a member of 27 other civic and fraternal organizations with national connections. One of the more obscure developments in Mississippi's business world was the establishment of the Committee of One Hundred in the early 1890s. Based in Vicksburg and under the leadership of Isaiah T. Montgomery, Mississippi's wealthiest African-American business

owner and statesman, the organization consisted of a group of 100 African-American business leaders, one from each of the 82 counties and 18 at-large members. Their mission was to meet regularly with their white business counterparts to minimize any further acts of violence against the state's prospering African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, on April 17-18, 1965, Jefferson Funeral Home celebrated the opening of a completely new center of operations that displaced its old frame building at 800 Monroe Street, but remained at the same address. The officers named on that occasion were W.H. Jefferson, Sr., President and General Manager; James E. Jefferson, Sr., Secretary-Treasurer of W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home and President of the Jefferson Burial Association, Inc; W.H. Jefferson, Jr., Vice President of the funeral home; and Robert J. Jefferson, Funeral Director and Vice President of Jefferson Burial Association, Inc; and

WHEREAS, *The Vicksburg Evening Post* dedicated eight full pages to the opening of the new building and grounds of the W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home and Burial Association. In its April 16, 1965, edition the paper wrote: "The W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home has grown to a place of deep admiration and respect of its community. Its facilities have grown to the very best available and its service continues to be measured by the highest ideals and heritage of our American way of life"; and

WHEREAS, all the members of the management group of 1965 have passed, except for Robert Jefferson, Sr., who today is the co-owner of the closely held family corporation, along with his nephew, James Jefferson, Jr., the Business Manager and President. Another member of the Jefferson Funeral Home team is Ronald Regan, 62, now working part-time as Embalmer and Funeral Director. Regan, a former U.S. Marine, served as Acting Corner of Warren County for one year and Deputy Corner under three different elected Corners; and

WHEREAS, James Jefferson, Jr., the Business Manager of Jefferson Funeral Home as well as the President of the closely held family corporation, has continued the family tradition of carrying on the business while performing public service. He currently serves as Justice Court Judge for District Three in Warren County. He is also a former Constable, serving for one year after being appointed to that office in 2009. His work at the funeral home, however, remains the central focus of his life just as it has since his earliest years of awareness of the business enterprise; and

WHEREAS, W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home stands proudly among the top ten oldest African-American businesses in the nation. Like other members of the industry that have served the African-American community as much in life as in death, the Jefferson family business may be considered the benchmark example; and it is with great pride that we commend the community

historical legacy and civic contributions of this family who is known throughout the community and state as entrepreneurs and public servants interested in Vicksburg and the State of Mississippi:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby recognize the legacy of W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home in Vicksburg as Mississippi's oldest African-American business founded in 1894 by Mississippi's first African-American Funeral Director W.H. Jefferson on the occasion of its 120th Anniversary Celebration, and extend our best wishes to the professional staff of this historic business.


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to James Jefferson, Jr., and Ronald C. Regan, representing W.H. Jefferson Funeral Home, forwarded to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Vicksburg, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
January 29, 2015



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 10, 2015



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES